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## Where Authorities Differ — and Fail.

By **Fr. Meyer**, Public Schools, Milwaukee.

While using a well-known German textbook in an advanced private class I found a surprisingly large number of inaccuracies, mistakes, errors, and blunders in its accidence as well as in its syntax. This aroused a critical suspicion in me as to the trustworthiness and reliability of other, less favorably known, books. To satisfy myself I studied and compared half a dozen textbooks with a rather critical eye. I discovered that none of them is free from more or less grave errors and blunders.

The authors' names cannot be divulged; suffice it to state that most of them have a Ph. D. attached and that their bearers are professors of German in universities or colleges, training future teachers of German. All books, except one, are of recent date: the one printed before 1900 seems to have the least number of mistakes. I mention this as a pendant to the general lamentation over the alleged insufficient training of teachers of German in our present days.

I would premise, by way of general remark, that I missed the genuine German ring in all of the books examined: I always labored under the impression that I was studying a language foreign to me. To mention one little incident: the *pluralis majesticus* in a textbook is certainly not German; and sentences like these: „*Geben* Sie die folgenden Sätze in allen Zeiten”—„*Geben* Sie die folgenden Verbformen etc.”—„*Geben* Sie etc.” jar one's Sprachgefühl!

I shall confine myself in my remarks to the accidence (Formenlehre), lest the editor should refuse all space, would I include in my discussion the very numerous errors found in the syntax of the books. And in these exciting times, the average reader is not enough at ease and at leisure to glance over *long* articles diagonally. The writer hopes that the authors, should they happen to read these criticisms, will take them in the spirit in which they are made, and if found valid, expunge the errors in the next edition of their books.

### I. PRONUNCIATION.

*General remarks:* Phonetics has become a veritable watch-word with the modernists amongst the foreign language teachers. With a pitiful look or even a despicable shrug, an enthusiastic “phony” will dismiss an old “fogy” who does not believe in the new panacea in language teaching. Before long the “conservatives” will be crowded out of the

last corner in the sun, unless the historical and dialectic linguists call a halt. May they do so before "phonetics" become "fanatics."

All, except one, of the books examined treat of pronunciation. A textbook of a foreign language without any rules on pronunciation certainly sins *in defectu*; but if a textbook for beginners has some thirty pages on pronunciation, including Vietor's Lauttafel and several pages of phonetic transcriptions, it is undoubtedly *peccans in excessu*! But whether a few paragraphs or many pages, authors should at least agree in their phonology, which they do not, as we shall see anon.

1. *The Vowels*. All authors agree that each vowel has but two sounds: long and short, except that a third sound (slurred) is claimed by most of them for the letter *e*. In three books, long and short *a* are illustrated by the two English words *art* and *artistic*. Now Webster, teachers of English, and my English students (college graduates) claim that the two *a*'s in the two English words are pronounced alike! (Webster: ärt—ärtistic) Two authors state that short *a* is the same sound as long *a* uttered quickly! One author warns against identifying long *e* ("like *they*") and long *ä* (like *hate*"). Now Webster marks both words, *they* and *hate*, with the macron over *a*! On the other hand, one author insists to be careful to pronounce long *ä* correctly as long *e*. Now read, according to this rule: „Ruth suchte Ähren auf dem Felde". „Der Held suchte Ehren auf dem Felde". „Die Bären frassen Beeren". „Die Ziegen machen bä-bä, die Schafe aber mä-mä". And will the student have to learn: *a, e, i, o, u, e, ö, ü*? Now comes the joker: the same author who insists upon pronouncing long *ä* like long *e*, states, in another book, that long *ä* is similar to *a* in *care*! But *a* in *care* is never pronounced like long German *e*!

In their rules concerning the *value* of vowels, the authors do not agree, by any means! Here is one set of rules: "Vowels are *always* (*sic*) long: 1. when doubled; 2. when followed by silent *h*; 3. *i* when followed by silent *e*; 4. *generally* (*sic*) in open syllables." Another author changes "always" under 3. to *generally* and "generally" under 4. to *always*. Who is correct? Must we begin to pronounce *i* long in: vierzehn, vierzig, Viertel, kriegte, etc.? None of the authors states and illustrates the fact that silent *h* stands at the end of a syllable or before *l, m, n, r*, except in words where it is not a phonetical but an etymological *h*. Why not illustrate long *a, e, o, u* thus: *da, kam, nah, Mahl, Rahm, Sahne, Jahr, Saal*, etc.?

Here is another, grossly incorrect, rule: "Vowels are long in final syllables before single consonant: Anton, Emil." On the next page we find these words: Fokus, Moses, Jakob. Add Modus, Faktum, Atlas, etwas, Augustus, etc., and pronounce same according to the rule given!

Here is another fast rule of another author, no exceptions being given: "Vowels are *always (sic)* short when followed by two or more consonants." How would you pronounce: Art, Bart, zart, Geburt, Mond, gräbt, gibst, sagst, a. o.? The consequence of such sweeping rules is that teachers of German pronounce gibst, gebt, sagst, legst, etc., with a short vowel, not knowing that the personal ending of verbforms has no influence upon the value of the vowel. When questioned by a pupil who knew the pronunciation to be incorrect, a certain teacher argued: according to a rule two consonants make the vowel short!!

The following three rules are a tohuwabohu to me: 1. *Stressed* vowels are generally long in an open syllable; 2. *Stressed* vowels are generally short in a closed syllable (weg, das); 3. *Unstressed* vowels are generally short (bin, mit). What I would like to know is: *when* a stressed vowel in an open syllable is *not* long; why the vowel in „weg" and „das" is stressed and in „bin" and „mit" unstressed? I confess that I am but a tyro in the mysteries of the latter day craft. Will the editor kindly answer the two questions?

A few peculiarities: von, Koch, noch and the like were marked with long vowel. One author claims that *das* has a long vowel and *dass* a short one. Still another states that the vowel is long in der, das, des when used as demonstratives.

2. *The Consonants.* There is more conformity amongst the authors when they treat of the consonants. Where they do not agree, it is, as a rule, of very small importance. Thus it matters little whether you pronounce final *g* after a vowel like *k* or like *ch*, because both sounds occur in many other words after a vowel at the end of a syllable. All agree that voiced consonants become voiceless at the end of a word. Most of them mention *b*, *d*, *g* as undergoing such a change. But although *v* is rated as voiced and *f* as voiceless, none of the authors seems to have a Victorian ear fine enough to notice the difference in pronouncing this sound in Motiv and Motives, in Brief and Briefes, of thief, thieves, Deif, Deibel (low German) same in Scandinavian languages. At least none mentions these letters in connection with the above stated sound-rule.

One author claims that *st* and *sp* at the beginning of a word are "not quite" pronounced like *scht*, *schp*, the others say they are. One author allows the *ch*-sound in Chaos, Choral, etc., others say: *k*, when preceding *a*, *o*, *u* or a consonant.

3. *The Accent.* "The prefix has the accent if the last component can be used by itself." But how about: undenkbar, unglaublich, unerwartet, and many, many more? It is incorrect to state that *erz-*, *ur-*, and *miss-* *always* take the accent. In two books we have the rule: *miss-*, *voll-*, *durch-*, *unter-*, *über-*, *um-*, *wieder-* *often* have the accent. Why not state

when and when not? It would have been easy and safe to do so. In one book there are some 250 paragraphs on grammar, but I could not find a single one on the accent.

## II. INFLECTION.

"Nouns ending in *-el* and *-er* never have an ending in the plural." This rule must be a bad misprint; for it is hardly imaginable that a college professor should not know that all feminine nouns in *-el* and *-er*, except *Tochter* and *Mutter*, take an *n* for the plural. To be exact: there are a few masculines in *-er* and *-el* with an *n* in the plural; e. g., *Muskel*, *Bauer*, *Vetter*, *Hader*. All authors say that *jemand*, *jedermann*, *niemand* are generally uninflected, but *may* take *s* in the genitive. The fact is: they *must* be inflected in the possessive and *may* be inflected in the other two oblique cases. It would be interesting to know with whose heifer they have been ploughing.

A very bad *lapsus pennae* or *memoriae* happened to the author when penning this rule: Feminines of measurement when preceded by a number, have no ending in the plural. According to this rule, we should say: 3 *Elle Tuch*, 4 *Tonne Kohlen*, 5 *Kanne Öl*, 6 *Tasse Kaffee!!* Until now *Mark* and *Hand* have been the only feminines thus used.

Several authors state that *eins*, *zwei*, and *drei* are the only cardinals which may be inflected. But it is good German to say: *auf allen Vieren*, *mit fünfen*, *zu sechsen*, *um zwölfte*.

The rule: "The strong declension is used after a personal pronoun" is, at least, questionable. Cf. „*Wer nie sein Brot mit Tränen ass, der kennt euch nicht, ihr himmlischen Mächte.*“ „*Wir armen Menschenkinder sind eitel arme Sünder.*“ „*Wir gemeinen deutschen Bürgersleute.*“ „*Am Golde hängt, zum Golde drängt doch alles, ach wir Armen!*“ „*Nun schweigt einmal, ihr Jungen, jetzt wollen wir Alten reden.*“ Nor would I subscribe to the rule that the long form in *e* in the imperative is preferable to that without *e*. It seems to be natural to use the short form when commanding.

In some of the textbooks the classification of strong nouns and verbs are amazingly intricate and annoyingly confusing, especially for the teacher. One author expects the pupil to answer in German: The strong verb has the following changes: *ei*, *ie*, *ie*; *ie*, *o*, *o*; *i*, *a*, *u*; *i*, *a*, *o*; *e*, *a*, *o*; *a*, *e*, *a*; *a*, *u*, *a*; *a*, *ie*, *a*! And this author claims that the inductive method is being used in his textbook.

One author has a paradigm with 30 imperatives and two thirds of the whole conjugation is taken up by the subjunctive. Besides, some ten pages are given to this mode in the grammar proper. The book has been written by a champion of the "direct method."

The rule: "Strong verbs with vowel *e* change this *e* into *ie* in the 2d and 3d pers. sing. and in the imperative" is not correct. A few verbs taken from the author's own list will disprove his rule: *scheren*, *stehen*, *weben*, *gehen*, *genesen*, *heben*, *melken*, and many more.

### III. THE GENDER.

Homer nodded when the rule was penned that nouns ending in *-er* are masculine. There are any number of fem. and neut. nouns ending in *-er*. Nor is the rule correct that nouns ending in *-en* are masc., except *das Leben*, and infinitives when used as nouns. Cf. *das Becken*, *Laken*, *Kissen*, *Wappen*, *Zeichen*, etc.

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## The Essentials of the Direct Method.\*

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By **Prof. Anton Appelman**, Uni. of Vermont.

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Whatever I may say in the course of this brief address concerning the Direct or Reform Method is purely subjective opinion derived from personal experience as a teacher here and abroad, and refers first of all to the teaching of German.

Charles Hart Handschin in his pamphlet, "*The Teaching of Modern Languages*," U. S. Bureau of Education, Bulletin No. 3 (510), 1913, says of the Direct Method: "It makes use of all that is valuable in the other methods, and thus may be considered an eclectic method which is eminently adapted to our modern education with its varied demands." The year 1882 is commonly recognized as the year of the birth of the Direct Method, the time when Wilhelm Viëtor published his remarkable book: "*Der Sprachunterricht muss umkehren*" by Q.(uosque) T.(andem). Professor Viëtor, himself a phonetician, laid the greatest stress in modern language instruction upon the phonetic drill. Dr. Max Walter who, through his famous *Musterschule* in Frankfurt a. M., became the strongest practical advocate of the Direct Method, adheres warmly to the use of phonetics, but, in cases where the result can be more quickly attained, he does not hesitate to employ the method of imitation in the teaching of pronunciation just as did the so much criticised Natural Method.

The most prominent exponents of the Direct Method in this country are divided. Some, as Eduard Prokosch, cling rather closely to phonetics; others, like Carl A. Krause, the efficient champion of the Walter Method

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\* From an address delivered before the Vermont Group of the New England Modern Language Association, April 21, 1917.